



## PREVENTION RESEARCH CENTERS PROGRAM

### WHAT IS THE PUBLIC HEALTH PROBLEM?

- The behavioral and environmental factors that cause many chronic diseases, injuries, poor pregnancy outcomes and some infectious diseases need to be addressed and changed.
- Prevention research makes a critical contribution to keeping people free from disease and helping them alter risk factors in their lives and in their communities.
- Gaps that exist between known research findings and the translation of those findings into public health practice and policy need to be eliminated.
- As the nation's population ages and as health care costs increase, prevention is an even more critical part of the national health care agenda.

### WHAT HAS CDC ACCOMPLISHED?

The Prevention Research Centers (PRC) program is a national network of 28 academic research centers committed to prevention research and the translation of that research into programs and policies. The centers work with members of their communities to develop and evaluate community-based interventions that address the leading causes of death and disability in the nation. Linking university researchers, health agencies, community-based organizations, and national nonprofit organizations facilitates the translation of promising research findings into practical and effective programs. CDC's PRC program places special emphasis on improving the quality of life among special populations (e.g. youth, elderly and underserved) and curbing the nation's excessive health care costs.

*Example of program in action:* The University of Washington Health Promotion Research Center is one of two centers focusing on healthy aging. In 1993, the center collaborated with the Group Health Cooperative of Puget Sound and Senior Services of Seattle/King County to develop a physical activity program for seniors. The program emphasizes activities to increase endurance, strength, balance, and flexibility. The pilot study showed that participants improved significantly in almost every area tested—from physical and social functioning to levels of pain and depression. The health care costs for participants were almost 50% lower than for nonparticipants. Now the program is offered in 33 senior centers and senior residences in the Puget Sound region and has been replicated in five states.

### WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

Five pilot projects have been started through funding provided to the Association of State and Territorial Chronic Disease Program Directors and the Association of State and Territorial Directors of Health Promotion and Public Health Education. These grants enable prevention centers to extend their expertise beyond their communities to other state health agencies needing technical assistance. In one of these projects, the University of South Florida will help the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services integrate social marketing concepts and methods into health promotion and chronic disease prevention programs. The PRC program is also developing an evaluation plan. The centers and their partners are creating models to describe collective attributes and establishing criteria for measuring achievements. Results will help meet stakeholders' accountability requirements.

For information on this and other CDC programs, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/programs>

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